

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 212) to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act to provide for the assessment and management of the risk of cyanotoxins in drinking water, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 212

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Drinking Water Protection Act".

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT TO THE SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT.

(a) AMENDMENT.—Part E of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 1459. ALGAL TOXIN RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT.

"(a) STRATEGIC PLAN.—

"(1) DEVELOPMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this section, the Administrator shall develop and submit to Congress a strategic plan for assessing and managing risks associated with algal toxins in drinking water provided by public water systems. The strategic plan shall include steps and timelines to—

"(A) evaluate the risk to human health from drinking water provided by public water systems contaminated with algal toxins;

"(B) establish, publish, and update a comprehensive list of algal toxins which the Administrator determines may have an adverse effect on human health when present in drinking water provided by public water systems, taking into account likely exposure levels;

"(C) summarize—

"(i) the known adverse human health effects of algal toxins included on the list published under subparagraph (B) when present in drinking water provided by public water systems; and

"(ii) factors that cause toxin-producing cyanobacteria and algae to proliferate and express toxins;

"(D) with respect to algal toxins included on the list published under subparagraph (B), determine whether to—

"(i) publish health advisories pursuant to section 1412(b)(1)(F) for such algal toxins in drinking water provided by public water systems;

"(ii) establish guidance regarding feasible analytical methods to quantify the presence of algal toxins; and

"(iii) establish guidance regarding the frequency of monitoring necessary to determine if such algal toxins are present in drinking water provided by public water systems;

"(E) recommend feasible treatment options, including procedures, equipment, and source water protection practices, to mitigate any adverse public health effects of algal toxins included on the list published under subparagraph (B); and

"(F) enter into cooperative agreements with, and provide technical assistance to, affected States and public water systems, as identified by the Administrator, for the purpose of managing risks associated with algal toxins included on the list published under subparagraph (B).

"(2) UPDATES.—The Administrator shall, as appropriate, update and submit to Congress the strategic plan developed under paragraph (1).

"(b) INFORMATION COORDINATION.—In carrying out this section the Administrator shall—

"(1) identify gaps in the Agency's understanding of algal toxins, including—

"(A) the human health effects of algal toxins included on the list published under subsection (a)(1)(B); and

"(B) methods and means of testing and monitoring for the presence of harmful algal toxins in source water of, or drinking water provided by, public water systems;

"(2) as appropriate, consult with—

"(A) other Federal agencies that—

"(i) examine or analyze cyanobacteria or algal toxins; or

"(ii) address public health concerns related to harmful algal blooms;

"(B) States;

"(C) operators of public water systems;

"(D) multinational agencies;

"(E) foreign governments;

"(F) research and academic institutions; and

"(G) companies that provide relevant drinking water treatment options; and

"(3) assemble and publish information from each Federal agency that has—

"(A) examined or analyzed cyanobacteria or algal toxins; or

"(B) addressed public health concerns related to harmful algal blooms.

"(c) USE OF SCIENCE.—The Administrator shall carry out this section in accordance with the requirements described in section 1412(b)(3)(A), as applicable.

"(d) FEASIBLE.—For purposes of this section, the term 'feasible' has the meaning given such term in section 1412(b)(4)(D)."

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall prepare and submit to Congress a report that includes—

(1) an inventory of funds—

(A) expended by the United States, for each of fiscal years 2010 through 2014, to examine or analyze toxin-producing cyanobacteria and algae or address public health concerns related to harmful algal blooms; and

(B) that includes the specific purpose for which the funds were made available, the law under which the funds were authorized, and the Federal agency that received or spent the funds; and

(2) recommended steps to reduce any duplication, and improve interagency coordination, of such expenditures.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to re-

visé and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 212, the Drinking Water Protection Act, which I reintroduced from last Congress in January. This important, bipartisan legislation requires the EPA to develop and submit a strategic plan to Congress for assessing and managing risks associated with algal toxins in drinking water provided by public water systems.

Unfortunately, from the Great Lakes to other surface freshwaters across the country, algal toxins, produced by harmful algal blooms, are presenting a serious concern to human health and safety.

Last August, half a million people in the Toledo, Ohio, area, including many of my constituents, weren't able to utilize their public drinking water for over 2 days without risking potentially negative health effects due to a high level of algal toxins detected in the city's public water supply. During that time, concerns and questions were and have since been raised about health effects data, testing protocols, treatment processes, and appropriate short- and long-term responses. Furthermore, during hearings in the House Energy and Commerce Committee, witnesses testified about the further complexity of this issue due to the numerous other algal toxins and variants that may have potential negative health effects when present in public drinking water.

I commend the work that the U.S. EPA, the State of Ohio, and others have done since the Toledo water emergency to ensure public safety; however, the situation demonstrated the need for a more strategic, comprehensive, and strong scientific approach to protect our citizens' public drinking water. I believe H.R. 212 does just this.

Specifically, the legislation calls for the EPA's strategic plan to include steps and timelines to: evaluate the risk to human health from drinking water provided by public water systems contaminated with algal toxins; establish, publish, and update a comprehensive list of algal toxins which the administrator determines may have an adverse effect on human health when present in public drinking water and provide a summary of those known adverse effects; publish health advisories and testing methods if the EPA determines it is warranted based on the published list; recommend feasible treatment options; enter into cooperative agreements and provide technical assistance to affected States and public water systems to manage risks associated with algal toxins; and identify gaps in the EPA's understanding of algal toxins.

I want to thank all the cosponsors of this bill as well as Chairman UPTON,

Subcommittee Chairman SHIMKUS, and all the other staff and stakeholders who have worked diligently on this important legislation.

I urge the full support of my colleagues for H.R. 212.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, harmful algal blooms are a serious and growing threat to public health. The toxins they produce threaten communities that draw their water from coastal areas and the Great Lakes. They also pose risks to those who swim in contaminated waters or eat contaminated fish.

Health impacts include skin and eye irritation, gastrointestinal illness, cancer, paralysis, and even death. Economic impacts are also serious, adversely affecting fishing, recreation, and tourism. Estimates of annual costs of these algal blooms in the United States are in the billions of dollars.

This summer, Toledo, Ohio, experienced a profound disruption when citizens woke to a “do not drink” order. The impacts were significant and widespread. But the problem is not limited to Ohio or Lake Erie. Harmful algal blooms have been a recurring problem in my home State of New Jersey for decades. So I appreciate that the majority is taking up this bipartisan legislation to begin to address this most important environmental problem.

This bill is a good step. More needs to be done. I am happy to say that language reported from the Energy and Commerce Committee reflects several changes sought by Democratic members of the committee. The bill was broadened to ensure that EPA will look at all algal toxins that may have an adverse effect on human health and consider source water protection measures, which are the preferred and most effective approach to managing harmful algal blooms.

I thank the chairmen and majority staff for working with Ranking Member TONKO, myself, and the Democratic staff to improve the bill.

For too long, Republicans in Congress have been more interested in attacking the EPA than supporting the important work the Agency does to protect human health, and safe drinking water should be a bipartisan issue. Unfortunately, this bill does lack resources.

Addressing cyanotoxins in drinking water is very expensive for States and water utilities. If Congress doesn't make funding available at the Federal level, the money will have to come out of already strained State budgets or out of consumers' pockets. The cooperative agreements envisioned in the bill can address some of these costs, Mr. Speaker, but only if they are funded, and the strategic plan will have no impact if there are no resources to carry it out.

So I hope this bill can be the start of broader drinking water work to address

important threats like climate change, fracking, security, and aging infrastructure. As we continue our drinking water work this Congress, I hope the majority will recognize the importance of funding in addressing these needs.

Resources are central to the conversation about safe drinking water. Much of our Nation's drinking water infrastructure is well beyond its useful life and in desperate need of replacement. Algae and other emerging threats, spurred by climate change and other factors, add to the challenge. Investing in drinking water infrastructure protects public health, creates jobs, and boosts the economy, and this is something that we should all support.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues on the Energy and Commerce Committee, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA), and my good friend from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for their hard work to address an important environmental threat.

I support this bill. I urge its adoption.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I, too, would ask that the House pass H.R. 212.

I appreciate, again, all of the work from all the members and the staff in putting this bill together and getting it on the floor, and also Chairman UPTON for his work on the legislation as well as Chairman SHIMKUS.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Drinking Water Protection Act, to arm communities against the threats posed by toxic algae.

The water emergency across the Toledo region for three days last August highlighted the need for a more robust federal response to harmful algal blooms in our Great Lakes and around the country.

Nearly half a million people, businesses, and hospitals were without fresh water from the city's system.

First and foremost, Northern Ohio—which draws its sustenance from Lake Erie—has to guarantee our water is safe to drink.

Our communities must be informed and prepared to respond, in the event of another emergency.

This bill is an important step in the right direction.

It is my hope that it expedites work at the U.S. EPA to publish long-overdue guidelines on safe consumption limits and testing protocols, in addition to treatment methods—information the EPA has been working on for more than a decade and a half.

This is information that our mayors, our governor, and our citizens are clamoring for.

Congress needs to pass this bill, and I hope our counterparts in the Senate will take up the measure quickly.

Still, this bill only addresses one facet of the challenge.

We must meet the larger challenge of stopping the growth of these blooms at their source—the nutrients flooding through our rivers, into Lake Erie.

That imperative is not included in this particular bill, but we are working through pro-

grams like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to install conservation projects across our watershed.

Congress should overturn the ill-advised proposed cuts to the GLRI program and fully fund it.

The EPA and Corps of Engineers are also working to better protect our waterways through the Clean Water Act.

If we are interested in protecting our Lakes and rivers and the communities that rely on them, Congress should stop opposing this important progress.

Until the flow of algae-feeding nutrients into the lake is stopped, the risk of further water emergencies will persist.

I urge my colleagues to join me in this broader effort, and that starts by supporting the bill before us today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 212, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1615

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION CONSOLIDATED REPORTING ACT OF 2015

Mr. WALDEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 734) to amend the Communications Act of 1934 to consolidate the reporting obligations of the Federal Communications Commission in order to improve congressional oversight and reduce reporting burdens.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 734

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Federal Communications Commission Consolidated Reporting Act of 2015”.

SEC. 2. COMMUNICATIONS MARKETPLACE REPORT.

Title I of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 151 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 13. COMMUNICATIONS MARKETPLACE REPORT.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—In the last quarter of every even-numbered year, the Commission shall publish on its website and submit to the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report on the state of the communications marketplace.

“(b) CONTENTS.—Each report required by subsection (a) shall—

“(1) assess the state of competition in the communications marketplace, including competition to deliver voice, video, audio,